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About the Author

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Abstract

Opium is at the heart of the war economy in Afghanistan, involving a broad range of actors. It generates a sustainable violence cycle and, while international troops withdraw from the country, threatens the Afghan government's reconstruction efforts. The European Union (EU) plays an important part in the debate on how to deal with this issue. Several counter-narcotics policies have been implemented since 2001 and have mostly failed. This paper looks at these failures and questions the European Union's ability to help tackle the problem of opium in Afghanistan. It argues that a comprehensive development response, backed by counter-narcotics incentives, could unfasten the spiral of the war economy. It also argues that the EU has developed relevant policies based on poverty alleviation and a structural approach to the opium issue but still lacks the means for action and for donor coordination in order to significantly influence the situation.

Introduction

In 2013, opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan reached the highest level ever recorded: twelve years of counter-narcotics policies led by Western countries could not stop the expansion of poppy farming. The European Commission has disbursed US \$2.8 billion over the period 2002-2011¹ in order to honour its commitment to a “prosperous and democratic Afghanistan”,² while the potential export value of opiates at the Afghan border, estimated by the United Nations, stretched to US \$3.0 billion in 2013 alone.³ 2014 is a critical year for the country, with international troops withdrawing and a new round of elections being held. Dealing with the heavy-weight opium economy will be a key factor in defining the direction taken by a country that is slowly rebuilding but could swiftly fall back into civil war.

The culture of drug crops in Afghanistan can be conceptualised as a rational cost-benefit calculation conducted by various agents maximising their profits. This paper queries the extent to which the European Union (EU) can help influence these calculations and tackle the problem of opium in Afghanistan.

As all actors involved in the country, the European Union confronts a dynamic system of economic incentives for violence based on drug crops. Unlike most other actors though, the EU aims to mainstream counter-narcotics in its actions in the country. By exploring the idea of drug crops shaping economic and political structures in Afghanistan, this paper argues that a comprehensive, poverty-oriented approach integrating security and development policies is necessary to succeed in a comprehensive counter-narcotics approach and in the stabilisation of the country. It also argues that the EU's general strategies and specific policies represent a strong basis for action in the country, making it a particularly relevant partner for Afghanistan. Yet, the EU still lacks the necessary means for further action and for coordinating donors.

Analysing the opium issue and understanding how to influence the related cost-benefit calculations entails three steps: first, the notions of war economy and structural approach are defined; second, these notions are applied to poppy economics in order to identify actors' interests and interactions; and third, the

¹ Government of Afghanistan, Ministry of Finance, *Development Cooperation Report 2012*, Kabul, 2012, p. 48.

² *EU-Afghanistan Joint Declaration, Committing to a New EU-Afghan Partnership*, Strasbourg, 16 November 2005, p. 1.

³ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) & Government of Afghanistan, Ministry of Counter Narcotics, *Afghan Opium Survey 2013*, Kabul and Vienna, December 2013, p. 72.

positive and negative incentives implied by several counter-narcotics policies are compared in relation to local interests and interactions. This analysis of past policy attempts shows that a comprehensive, poverty-reduction oriented approach is necessary to impede the opium economy. The strategies developed by the relevant institutions of the EU are then scrutinised in order to see what elements of such a comprehensive poverty-reduction approach they include. Finally, actions of the EU in Afghanistan are studied in order to assess their role and impact.

Conceptual framework

This section defines the major concepts that will be referred to throughout the paper as well as the methodology used, combining economic reasoning and the analysis of policies.

Definition of concepts

Unlike the 'break-down' models of conflict, which assume that wars are chaotic and irrational, the notion of war economy looks at the financial interactions of actors who maximise profits in a war situation. The literature of war studies shows that some form of rational organisation often emerges within the conflict, with non-state actors for instance providing state-like services such as security for trade.⁴ A new economic system builds up, especially in conflicts involving natural resources or the production of drugs.⁵

The concept of structural foreign policy refers to a policy aiming to influence the political and socio-economic structures under which states operate. It is characterised by its long-term focus, the attention paid to sustainability and the interrelatedness of dimensions and levels.⁶ A structural approach to an issue consequently implies its inclusion in a broad contextual analysis and in a long-term action plan that targets underlying political and socio-economic structures. Coordination efforts and the use of a large array of instruments are the two central points of this policy concept. Diplomacy and trade agreements, but also

⁴ D. Keen, "The Economic Functions of Violence in Civil Wars", *Adelphi Paper*, no. 320, London, 1998.

⁵ For a proposed differentiation between war economy, 'black' economy and coping economy in Afghanistan, see M. Bhatia & J. Goodhand, "Profits and Poverty: Aid, Livelihoods and Conflict in Afghanistan", *HPG Background Paper*, London, February 2003, pp. 6-9.

⁶ S. Keukeleire, "EU Structural Foreign Policy and Structural Conflict Prevention", in V. Kronenberger & J. Wouters (eds.), *The European Union and Conflict Prevention, Policy and Legal Aspects*, The Hague, TMC Asser Press, 2004, pp. 153-154.

development cooperation are tools of structural foreign policies. European policies ranging from the European Security Strategy⁷ to the Communication on Conflict Prevention⁸ include elements of structural foreign policy.

The interdependence of all elements of development is increasingly acknowledged as a key to efficiency and sustainability. Although sometimes frustrating because it does not provide quick results, the 'comprehensive development' approach has proved valuable to avoid backlashes, relapses and counter-productive assistance.⁹ It was first developed by the World Bank and has been largely integrated in European policies like 'The European Consensus on Development'.¹⁰ The 'comprehensive development' approach takes into account the interdependence of governance, human, social, economic, financial, and environmental dimensions when planning development cooperation. In the case of Afghanistan, for instance, rural micro-finance, rural development, local capacity-building, decentralised state-building, securitisation and the return of refugees are overlapping development challenges that all are elements of a comprehensive development approach.

An increasing number of development cooperation actors stress the need for coordination among governments, donors, civil society and the private sector as well as harmonisation of donors' priorities and procedures. They promote local ownership, with the receiving country being the principal coordinator of their 'comprehensive development' strategies. These 'coordination', 'harmonisation' and 'ownership' goals are defined in 'The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness',¹¹ which aims to mainstream the concept of 'principled development'.

⁷ European Council, *A Secure Europe in a Better World – European Security Strategy*, Brussels, 12 December 2003.

⁸ European Commission, *Communication from the Commission on Conflict Prevention*, COM (2001) 211 final, Brussels, 11 April 2001.

⁹ N. Hanna & R. Agarwala, "Toward a Comprehensive Development Strategy", *OED Working Paper Series*, no. 16, Washington D.C., The World Bank, 2000, pp. 9-10.

¹⁰ European Parliament, Council of the European Union, European Commission, "Joint statement on European Union Development Policy: 'The European Consensus'", *Official Journal of the European Union*, C46, 24 February 2006.

¹¹ OECD, *The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action*, Paris/Accra, 2005/2008, followed by Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, *Busan Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation*, Busan, 2011.

Methodology

In 1980, Louis Dupree described statistics on Afghanistan as “wild guesses based on inadequate data”.¹² In 2003, Jonathan Goodhand showed that the centralised and weak Afghan state was not able to give a reliable picture of the rural economy: because of taxation and conscription, data related to land and those related to family members were blurred by a “mud curtain”.¹³ Over three decades of conflict have made this problem worse. Regarding the opium economy, its illicit nature creates problems for documentation.¹⁴ The figures used in this case study should consequently not be read as authoritative, but they are reliable enough for the purpose of the analysis.

To analyse the opium issue and the EU’s role in this field, this study combines data on the volumes and economic impact of opium production (mostly from the UNODC Afghanistan Opium Survey and the World Bank Data Catalogue¹⁵) with an analysis on political and economic structures, drawing on the academic literature. This framework is used to assess the counter-narcotics policies and explain their results. EU policy documents are analysed and interviews are used to gauge the coherence of the EU’s approach. The concrete outcomes and the impact of EU policies are appraised using policy assessments and third actors’ reports.

The following section applies the concepts of war economy and structural approach to poppy economics in Afghanistan in order to identify actors’ interests and interactions.

Opium and sustainable violence: an analysis of poppy economics as a system of rational cost-benefit calculations

*The role of the opium economy in Afghanistan does not represent a new trend. In many ways, history reinvents itself.*¹⁶

The opium issue is central in both the political structures and the economy of Afghanistan. Even after the dramatic drought of 2008, the opiate economy

¹² L. Dupree, *Afghanistan*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1980, cited in J. Goodhand, *Frontiers and Wars: a Study of the Opium Economy in Afghanistan*, draft, SOAS, University of London, January 2003, retrieved January 2014, http://www.necsi.edu/afghanistan/pdf_data/SeminarJG29012003.pdf

¹³ J. Goodhand, *Frontiers and Wars*, *op.cit.*, p. 2.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ World Bank, *Data Catalog*, retrieved March 2014, <http://datacatalog.worldbank.org>.

¹⁶ P.A. Chouvy, “Afghanistan’s Opium Production in Perspective”, *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2006, p. 21.

represented one third of the total legal economy.¹⁷ In the Southern provinces, where cultivation of opium poppy¹⁸ and cannabis¹⁹ is concentrated, the drug sector is the main industry.

Opium poppy cultivation in the Afghan region became massive and turned into a state monopoly under the reign of Akbar (1556 to 1605).²⁰ The Afghan land was recognised as the most suitable for this crop by an Empire that stretched from the Bengal to Kabul. The contemporary opium issue arose in 1979, when the Soviet Union invaded the country and systematically bombed its agricultural fields. Irrigation systems were destroyed and farming land surface significantly reduced. Subsequently, farmers were pushed towards the production of poppy due to its high value. By 1989 Afghanistan produced 14% of the world's opium.²¹ The synergies between the drugs and domestic conflicts continued to grow after the Soviet withdrawal in 1989 and the subsequent reduction of aid flows from the US and Saudi Arabia. In a state of constant civil war, Afghanistan became the largest producer of illicit opium in 1991 with 1,980 metric tons per year.²² Fights between factions, including the Taliban, caused the emergence of a war economy in which opium production financed weapons. Open conflict generated a rise in poverty, which in turn pushed more farmers towards opium production.

Moral issues play a role in farmers' decisions to grow poppies, since opium is often considered *haram* (that is, against Islamic law). Nonetheless, the behaviour of the actors involved in the war economy can be analysed as rational economic calculation. Traffickers offer credit facilities to farmers: they buy the future harvest during the sowing season at a price below market value. This system, called the *salaam*, is particularly relevant for returning refugees and indebted farmers. The *salaam* also provides control and profits to local strongmen. It defines spheres of influence, and in some places opium is the only crop that can grow without

¹⁷ UNODC, *Addiction, Crime and Insurgency. The Transnational Threat of Afghan Opium*, Vienna, 2009, see graph p. 95. The UNODC's results (*Afghanistan Opium Survey 2013, op.cit.*) show that this share fell to 15% in 2013 but it is likely to increase if GDP contracts because of international troop withdrawal.

¹⁸ UNODC, *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2013, op.cit.*, p. 10.

¹⁹ UNODC & Government of Afghanistan, *Afghanistan Cannabis Survey 2012*, Kabul and Vienna, September 2013, p. 9.

²⁰ A.-F. Ibn Mubarak, Akbar's vizier, *Ain-i-Akbari*, Fatehpur Sikri, around 1590. This record of the administration states that opium was cultivated in the Empire during this period.

²¹ United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), *Statistics and Analysis on Supply of and Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances*, Vienna, 1996, p. 8.

²² *Ibid.*

irrigation. It is therefore not only an illegal crop but an entire political and economic sub-system.²³

Counter-narcotics, from eradication to local governance pacts

*Opium had long ceased to found its empire on spells of pleasure; it was solely by the tortures connected with the attempt to abjure it, that it kept its hold.*²⁴

There have been numerous attempts to reduce opium production and trafficking in Afghanistan through a variety of methods. This section looks at several of these methods and draws a picture of the lessons learnt.

Eradication: supply-reduction by force

Eradication is *a priori* the most straightforward method to curb drug production. Yet, manual eradication or eradication through aerial spraying of herbicides destroys Afghan farmers' livelihood. It increased poverty in rural areas and had a negative impact on the image of the actors carrying out the eradication: the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Government of Afghanistan. Richard Holbrooke, US envoy for Afghanistan, calls eradication "the single most ineffective program in the history of American foreign policy. [...] It actually strengthens the Taliban and al-Qaeda, as well as criminal elements within Afghanistan".²⁵ In the absence of credit facilities after eradication, a lot of impoverished farmers planted poppy again using traffickers' loans.

'Money for not planting', another supply reduction method, has been tested by the British diplomats and troops in the Helmand province. They paid Afghan farmers not to farm. Some of the farmers used the money to expand and irrigate poppy fields in more remote locations.²⁶ Some others, who agreed not to plant, finally did not receive money due to a budget shortage. In this way, the entire

²³ For an analysis of the macroeconomic impact of opium (value added distribution, GDP, balance of trade and balance of payment) see J.B. Veron, "L'Economie de l'Opium en Afghanistan et ses Implications en termes de Développement", *Afrique Contemporaine*, no. 215, Paris, Agence Française de Développement, March 2005.

²⁴ T. De Quincey, "Confessions of an English Opium-Eater", *London Magazine*, September-October 1821, p. 69 of Dover's 1995 republication.

²⁵ R. Holbrooke, "Still Wrong in Afghanistan", *The Washington Post*, 23 January 2008.

²⁶ J. Nathan, "The Folly of Afghan Opium Eradication", *USA Today Magazine*, March 2009.

experiment lost credibility and was not conducted again.²⁷ These projects failed due to a lack of alternative livelihood and to a lack of control in farming activities. They show that Afghanistan and European policies in Afghanistan cannot rely solely on coercive supply reduction policies, which could result in the emergence of areas controlled by drug cartels and paramilitary groups, thus contradicting state-building efforts.

Substitution programmes: alternative crops and alternative markets

In an attempt to limit revenue losses caused by eradication, crop substitution programmes (saffron, cotton, etc.) were launched between 1989 and 1996. They were implemented by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with a 'poppy clause': abandoning poppy cultivation was a pre-requisite for aid. The assessment made by the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) shows that this conditionality created distrust and wariness in the relations between farmers and NGOs.²⁸ David Mansfield points out that the reasons for poppy cultivation were not taken into account.²⁹ Access to credit and access to markets, for instance, were ignored, and revenue levels were hardly matched. If these programmes contributed to reconstruction and rehabilitation, they did not lead to the emergence of long-lasting economic sectors and were not an efficient answer to the drug economy.

In October 2007, the European Parliament rallied for the idea of pilot projects of licensing poppy cultivation for the pharmaceutical industry.³⁰ Here the scheme was not a crop substitution but a market substitution. Creating an official system controlled by – and benefiting – the state, this proposal aimed to break the vicious circle of the drug economy.³¹ In an interview, the former Director of the Senlis Council Afghanistan confirms that in 2005, Habibullah Qaderi, then Afghanistan's Minister for Counter-narcotics, actually wanted the country to become a legal

²⁷ "Afghan farmers sue over poppy crops UK lawsuit could affect co-operation with troops", *The Herald*, 10 April 2006, cited in T. Mužik & A. Bartoli, *Narcotics, Organized Crime and Security in Eurasia, News Digest 17.04.06*, retrieved April 2010, <http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/inside/publications/NewsDigest%203-10%20April.pdf>

²⁸ The Afghanistan Drug Control and Rural Rehabilitation Programme was UNDCP's initial supply reduction initiative. See D. Mansfield, *Alternative Development in Afghanistan: The Failure of Quid Pro Quo*, Feldafing, August 2001, p. 3.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ European Parliament, *Recommendation to the Council of 25 October 2007 on Production of Opium for Medical Purposes in Afghanistan*, (2007/2125(INI)), retrieved December 2008, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&language=EN&reference=P6-TA-2007-0485>

³¹ F. Grare, "Anatomy of a Fallacy: The Senlis Council and Narcotics in Afghanistan", *Carnegie Working Paper*, no. 34, Waterloo, Ontario, February 2008, p. 7.

producer.³² Yet, there are difficulties implementing such a programme. Indeed, Article 23 of the 1961 UN Convention lays down conditions to become a legal producer that would have been hard to meet given the poor security situation in the poppy-producing provinces of Afghanistan.³³ If such a programme was to be implemented, its success would depend on the development of infrastructures, markets, sufficient revenue from legal opium and a higher level of law enforcement.

Jean-Luc Lemahieu declares that “[b]etween yesterday’s opium income and tomorrow’s legal income, today requires an increase in quality of life for the farmer and his family”.³⁴ Given the structural nature of the drug issue, a mere supply-reduction approach is doomed to fail and the prioritisation of poverty reduction objectives is the only framework that efficiently tackles the multifaceted economic calculation of Afghanistan’s rural population.

Principled development and the ‘comprehensive approach’ on narcotic drugs

In an interview a European Commission official admitted that “doing only crop substitution was a mistake. It has been done by everyone including the European Commission in Nangarhar. National rural development programmes with local ownership are now the main focus of our support. It empowers the government”.³⁵ This illustrates two of the lessons learnt from past experiments: development programmes must be ‘comprehensive’ and they must be ‘principled’.

‘Comprehensive’ development programmes are promoted by European policies like ‘The European Consensus on Development’ in order to overcome the shortcomings of alternative crop projects.³⁶ Rural development programmes cover alternative livelihood issues from seeds to transport and marketing infrastructure. Such cross-cutting programmes also seek to coordinate the return of refugees, rural micro-finance and decentralised state-building. Their final objective, which is also the main accountability criteria for all parties, is poverty alleviation.

³² Interview with a former director of the Senlis Council in Afghanistan, 20 April 2010. The interviewee adds that “the project was swiftly blocked by the American and British counsellors that held most power within the Ministry”.

³³ United Nations, “Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs”, *Treaty Series*, vol. 976, no. 14152, 1961.

³⁴ J.L. Lemahieu, UNODC Representative in Afghanistan, quoted in R. Nordland & T. Shah, “US Turns a Blind Eye to Opium in Afghan Town”, *The New York Times*, 20 March 2010, retrieved April 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/21/world/asia/21marja.html>

³⁵ Interview with Paul Turner, DG Relex (now EEAS), European Commission, Brussels, 2 February 2010. *This view is personal and does not represent the opinion of the European Commission.*

³⁶ European Parliament, Council of the European Union, European Commission, “Joint Statement on European Union Development Policy: ‘The European Consensus’ ”, *op.cit.*

'Principled' development cooperation sticks to local initiatives ('ownership' and 'leadership')³⁷ and promotes cooperation among donors ('coordination'³⁸). The need for local leadership has been verified the hard way in Afghanistan.³⁹ The government's leadership of development policies was arguably too weak, the Parliament and citizens were not involved enough in shaping those policies and donors were too often using their own implementing partners instead of the government's systems to deliver aid. As a consequence, development projects were not seen as local initiatives: the author's own field work conducted in October and November 2006 in Kandahar and Lashkar Gah provinces demonstrated that development projects were often perceived as NATO projects, leading to a deterioration of their security situation.

Building comprehensive, principled poverty-reduction policies is one of the greatest challenges faced by Afghanistan and donors like the EU today. These policies must recognise the opium issue as a key to development and as such integrate counter-narcotics goals. Development assistance generates both incentives and disincentives through facilitation, subsidies and conditionality (see Figure 1 below). Eradication and interdiction are risks imposed on poppy farmers. These methods all contribute to the following 'tool box', adapted from Peter Uvin's four categories of tools available to the international community to influence decisions in recipient countries:⁴⁰

³⁷ OECD, *The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, Accra Agenda for Action and Busan Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation*, *op.cit.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ "I believe the aspirations and demands of the people of Afghanistan today can be summarised in four simple words: Afghan leadership, Afghan ownership." H. Karzai, opening remarks, London Conference on Afghanistan, 28 January 2010.

⁴⁰ For Peter Uvin's four categories of incentives and disincentives in terms of human rights, see P. Uvin, *The Influence of Aid in Situations of Violent Conflict, A synthesis and a commentary on the lessons learned from case studies on the limits and scope for the use of development assistance incentives and disincentives for influencing conflict situations*, Informal Task Force on Conflict, Peace and Development Co-operation, Paris, OECD DAC, 1999, p. 3.

Fig. 1: Incentives and disincentives in terms of illicit crop cultivation

	Non-conditional	Conditional
Incentives	Subsidising seeds and ensuring market access for legal crop	Financing reconstruction if the community abandons poppy farming (the 'poppy clause')
Disincentives	Interdicting and eradicating	Threatening to reduce financial and public service provision in opium cultivating villages

Source: author's own compilation.

Georg Frerks, writing on peace conditionality, recalls that "due to the limited volume of aid relative to incomes from natural resources, the fact that donors' development activities per se are limited or absent in conflict areas, and that conditionality does not affect rebel groups very much", these categories generate limited change in actors' behaviour.⁴¹ In order to maximise incentives, the coordination of eradication, interdiction and comprehensive rural development programmes is required. According to European Commission officials, none of them should be conducted alone, and there appears to be a consensus on that point in the international community.⁴²

Nevertheless, the comprehensive approach endorsed by the EU faces an increased risk of inconsistency. Firstly, eradication and interdiction can contradict poverty reduction policies. Secondly, helping the farmers in breach of the law with alternative crops may create incentives for others to break the law and plant poppy. For that reason the counter-narcotics goal should not take over poverty alleviation. Thirdly, development projects aim for structural progress even though the security situation has not yet settled from a crisis level to an 'unstable peace', where conflict resolution and post-conflict peace building are usually considered possible.⁴³ This extra challenge means Afghanistan and its donors must match rural development with capacity building for the national police and army.

⁴¹ G. Frerks, *The Use of Peace Conditionalities in Conflict and Post-conflict Settings: A Conceptual Framework and a Checklist*, The Hague, Clingendael Institute, 2006, p. 31.

⁴² Interview with P. Turner, *op.cit.* The views expressed in this interview are personal.

⁴³ Interview with R. Kalantary, USG in Relief & Operation, Afghan Red Crescent Society, Kandahar, 12 November 2006. This view is personal and does not represent the opinion of the ARCS.

EU policy: a structural approach to the opium issue?

The EU's primary goal in development cooperation is, according to Articles 21 TEU and 208 TFEU⁴⁴, the eradication of poverty. This must also be the focus of all strategies in Afghanistan. Furthermore, positively influencing the Afghan war economy entails taking into account the intertwined nature of development and security on opium issues, and coping with the local complexities of aid efficiency.

This part starts by examining how the EU approaches 'new' security threats and how the destabilisation of Afghanistan fits into its analysis. Then the EU's country-specific policies are assessed by using the two following criteria: their relevance to the opium issue and their integration of aid effectiveness principles like 'ownership' and 'alignment'. Finally, its ability to develop as a platform for 'harmonisation' – another aid efficiency principle – and to diminish the fragmentation of aid in Afghanistan is examined.

The EU and new security threats

The European Security Strategy develops the ambition of sharing "the responsibility for global security".⁴⁵ It thus justifies the fact that European "forces have been deployed abroad to places as distant as Afghanistan".⁴⁶ Amongst the five most serious threats facing contemporary Europe, the strategy lists terrorism, state failure and organised crime. In light of these security priorities, Afghanistan appears to be a model case for EU action.⁴⁷ In listing these priorities, this short document uses the word "link" five times, so as to underline their interconnection and complexity. The European Security Strategy depicts the EU as "particularly well equipped to respond to such multi-faceted situations".⁴⁸

100 tons of heroin are consumed every year in the EU, generating criminality and profits for organised crime.⁴⁹ The EU has set out its vision in two policy papers, the

⁴⁴ European Union, "Consolidated Versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union of 13 December 2007", *Official Journal of the European Union*, C115, 9 May 2008.

⁴⁵ European Council, *A Secure Europe in a Better World – European Security Strategy*, Brussels, 12 December 2003, p. 1.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ E. Gross, "Europe's Growing Engagement in Afghanistan: What Success for ESDP?", *CFSP Forum*, vol. 5, no. 4, July 2003, pp. 12-13.

⁴⁸ European Council, *European Security Strategy*, *op.cit.*, p. 7.

⁴⁹ European Commission, *Impact Assessment, Commission Staff Working Document Accompanying the Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on an EU Action Plan on Drugs (2009-2012)*, SEC(2008) 2455, Brussels, 18 September 2008, p. 15.

latest versions of which are the 'EU Drugs Strategy 2013-2020'⁵⁰ and the 'EU Action Plan on Drugs 2013-2016'.⁵¹ The EU defines its strategy as a "balanced, integrated and evidence-based approach to the drugs phenomenon".⁵² It articulates a coherent policy framework touching upon supply, demand and trafficking. The important place development cooperation is given in the EU drug policy is typical of a comprehensive approach and is relevant to the Afghan opium issue. However, "[t]he priorities of EU drug policy are not well translated into external funding programmes and projects in third countries".⁵³ The European Commission's Impact Assessment called on European development actors to "[e]nsure the integration of projects in the drugs field into the co-operation and assistance programmes with third countries/regions. This should cover demand and supply reduction, as well as alternative development in producer and transit countries".⁵⁴

"Security is a precondition of development" says the European Security Strategy.⁵⁵ In the European Consensus on Development, state fragility is described as not being an inherent characteristic but rather a dynamic process.⁵⁶ Consequently, in fragile states, the EU focuses on prevention. In the Commission Communication 'Towards an EU Response to Situations of Fragility' two elements are underlined: the role of early warning and the contribution of Country Strategy Papers (CSPs) in giving impetus to assistance programmes to address the root causes of conflict and the risks of vulnerability as well as to include conflict sensitive approaches.⁵⁷ This link is characteristic of a structural foreign policy towards fragility which acknowledges the mutually reinforcing nature of poverty and state failure. In summarising the debate on fragility, the European Centre for Development Policy Management concluded that "most lessons learned point to the crucial importance of state-building [...]"

⁵⁰ Council of the European Union, "EU Drugs Strategy (2013-20)", *Official Journal of the European Union*, C402, Brussels, 29 December 2012.

⁵¹ Council of the European Union, "EU Action Plan on Drugs 2013-2016", *Official Journal of the European Union*, C351, Brussels, 30 November 2013.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁵³ European Commission, *Impact Assessment*, *op.cit.*, p. 28.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ European Council, *European Security Strategy*, *op.cit.*, p. 2.

⁵⁶ European Parliament, Council of the European Union, European Commission, "Joint statement on European Union Development Policy: 'The European Consensus'", *op.cit.*

⁵⁷ European Commission, "Towards an EU Response to Situations of Fragility - Engaging in difficult environments for sustainable development, stability and peace", COM(2007) 643 final, Brussels, 25 October 2007. On conflict sensitive approaches and how development assistance may contribute to fuel violent conflicts, for example through conflict-increasing distributional effects, see D. Haag, *The political dynamics of the security-development nexus*, The Hague, September 2004, retrieved January 2014, http://www.afespress.de/pdf/Hague/Sending_Development_security_nexus.pdf.

under local ownership".⁵⁸ The EU's policy focus on prevention and assistance in situations of state fragility is suitable in that regard.

The EU Afghan policy papers: counter-narcotics and aid effectiveness

The European Commission describes its country-specific development policies in CSPs which draw on the Commission's own budget. The Country Strategy Paper 2007-2013 for Afghanistan is meant to target its support at three focal areas: rural development, governance and health.⁵⁹ By mainstreaming counter-narcotics in these areas, it addresses the different aspects of the problem. The CSP states that "the guiding principles for EC assistance will be to utilise Government structures wherever this is feasible in implementing programmes and to provide continued support to existing national programmes".⁶⁰ This approach to alignment, which echoes the Paris Declaration's principle, initially encountered difficulties given the weak capacity of the Government of Afghanistan.⁶¹ In addition, the CSP, drafted in 2005, explains that the European strategy was to focus on the Nangarhar province, in an attempt to achieve greater impact. In the following years, experiences of alternative livelihood proved to be of little effect if not integrated in a broader and participative rural development scheme.

The EU Action Plan published by the Council in its Conclusions of October 2009⁶² is much less oriented towards poverty reduction.⁶³ By stating that "insecurity in Afghanistan cannot be addressed by military means alone",⁶⁴ the Action Plan insists on the importance of improved state-building, governance and the rule of law. On the one hand, the counter-narcotics strategy is placed in the rule of law chapter rather than in the rural development one and shows a focus on trafficking. On the other hand, the Council is not directly involved in development cooperation programming, and this explains its emphasis on actions like the EU police mission

⁵⁸ F. Faria & P. M. Ferreira, *An Adequate EU Response Strategy to Address Situations of Fragility and Difficult Environments*, Lisbon and Maastricht, ECDPM & IEEI, 9 July 2007, p. 70.

⁵⁹ European Commission, External Relations, *Country Strategy Paper, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2007-2013*, p. 18, retrieved January 2014, http://eeas.europa.eu/afghanistan/csp/07_13_en.pdf

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁶¹ OECD, *The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action*, *op.cit.*

⁶² Council of the European Union, *Strengthening EU Action in Afghanistan and Pakistan*, 2971st External Relations Council meeting, Conclusions, Luxembourg, 27 October 2009, retrieved January 2014, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/gena/110789.pdf.

⁶³ Council of the European Union, "EU Action Plan for Afghanistan and Pakistan", in Council of the European Union, *Strengthening EU Action in Afghanistan and Pakistan*, *op.cit.*, pp. 4-16.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

(EUPOL). The Conclusions express the common view of European states that “rural development remains one of the key entry points in improving livelihoods, eradicating poverty and stimulating economic recovery but also in building local level governance”.⁶⁵ “[T]he Comprehensive Agriculture and Rural Development Facility should receive EU support” along with “rural micro-credit schemes”.⁶⁶ The Council, in its Conclusions of June 2013, draws on the ‘alignment’ and ‘managing for results’ principles, by calling for

the development of a new strategy in place of the 2009 Action Plan that is aligned with the strategic thinking of the Government of Afghanistan, identifies deliverable objectives and timelines, and sets out a clear division of labour. The strategy should be ready for endorsement by mid-2014.⁶⁷

Thus, the EU’s country-specific policy papers are relevant to the structural issue of opium and increasingly integrate aid efficiency principles.

The need for harmonisation

The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness commits the signatory donors to the ‘harmonisation’ of their actions, by reducing the fragmentation of aid programmes, procedures and priorities.⁶⁸ This is particularly relevant for Afghanistan, where experience shows that aid, coming from a very large number of donors, has to be principled in order to help tackle the problem of opium.⁶⁹ The EU has a role to play in coordination at the European level and is committed to help “the Governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan in their leadership role in improving co-ordination, especially of aid”.⁷⁰ These two dimensions of coordination find echoes in the EU funding of the UN and of the Afghan National Development Strategy, as well as in the mandate of the European Union Special Representatives (EUSRs) and in the European Consensus on Development.

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) is in charge of leading the international civilian effort and of assisting the Government of Afghanistan in its task of coordinating aid. In this context, the European priority is

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Council of the European Union, *Council Conclusions on Afghanistan*, Foreign Affairs Council meeting, Luxembourg, 24 June 2013, retrieved January 2014, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/137590.pdf.

⁶⁸ OECD, *The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action*, *op.cit.*

⁶⁹ For an illustration of Ministries, donors and NGO coordination at the project level, see A. Ries, “Evaluation Retrospective du Projet FFEM d’Efficacité Énergétique dans la Construction en Afghanistan”, *Ex Post*, no. 25, Paris, Agence Française de Développement, May 2009, pp. 17-19.

⁷⁰ Council of the European Union, *EU Action Plan for Afghanistan and Pakistan*, *op.cit.*, p. 6.

"[s]trengthening the United Nations, equipping it to fulfil its responsibilities and to act effectively".⁷¹ This body is meant to contribute to the execution of the Afghan National Development Strategy, which is the main document for external coordination. The Afghan National Development Strategy has been drafted by the Government of Afghanistan in order to set the priorities and overall guidelines for development in the country. Its preparation "has been the biggest policymaking and strategy development event in the history of modern Afghanistan", and constitutes a step towards ownership.⁷² The EU is committed to the implementation of the Afghan National Development Strategy and should be soon channelling 50% of its aid through its structure and budget support.

To help in the difficult task of coordinating aid in Afghanistan, the EU decided to mandate a 'double-hatted' Special Representative, in charge of the first harmonisation at the European level. Vygaudas Usackas took office in April 2010 and was followed by Franz-Michael Mellbin in September 2013. The EUSR is both Head of the EU Delegation in Kabul and representative of the Council. Thus, the Special Representative is in a position to ensure consistency between the policies of the different institutions and to represent the Union. The Council Decision states that the EUSR "shall promote overall Union political coordination [and] ensure that all Union instruments in the field are engaged coherently".⁷³ It does not directly mention the coordination of Member States' policies, preferring the words "shall [work] in close co-operation with EU Member States' representatives in Afghanistan".⁷⁴ Such a European-level harmonisation proves difficult in the field of counter-narcotics, where Germany, for instance, advocates a demand-reduction policy based on harm reduction, while the UK has for long been closer to the US's position and a policy based on interdiction and supply reduction.

The EU perceives the drug problem as a new, multifaceted security threat. Its different policy papers show a balanced approach, based on development assistance. They increasingly integrate the principles of aid efficiency. Translating

⁷¹ European Council, *European Security Strategy*, *op.cit.*, p. 9.

⁷² S.M. Shah, *Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) Formulation Process: Influencing Factors and Challenges*, AREU, February 2009, p. 5, retrieved April 2010, http://www.afghaneic.net/library/other/ANDS_Policy_Process_09.pdf.

⁷³ Council of the European Union, "Council Decision (2010/168/CFSP) of 22 March 2010 Appointing the European Union Special Representative in Afghanistan", *Official Journal of the European Union*, L75, 23 March 2010, Article 12, p. 24.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, Article 3, p. 22.

these principles into effective ownership and harmonisation is one of the greatest challenges faced by the European Union in Afghanistan.

The EU 'cooperative power' capacity: a role in tackling the opium issue?

On the international scene, the EU is characterised by the low degree of coercion which it uses in order to exert influence. As a 'cooperative power', it relies largely on civilian means and negotiation. Its focus on shared interests led the EU to adopt the notion of 'partnership', with development cooperation and 'soft power' as its main tools. This paper argues that a comprehensive, poverty-oriented approach is necessary to succeed in counter-narcotics. After over ten years of European cooperation with the Government of Afghanistan, the extent to which the EU has contributed to the promotion of principled, comprehensive poverty alleviation policies can be assessed.

Results assessment of development aid and Trust Funds

Commentators like to emphasise the complementarity of NATO and the European Commission, the latter being considered a specialist of civilian means and Official Development Assistance (ODA). The 'Donor Financial Review' and 'Development Cooperation Reports' prepared by the Afghan Ministry of Finance give a more detailed image of the European contribution.⁷⁵ The European Commission ranks first in transparency and in submitting timely reporting on aid to the Government of Afghanistan. Between 2002 and 2011, the EU is recorded to have disbursed US \$2.8 billion in total.⁷⁶ This figure should be analysed in comparison with the US \$47.5 billion of the United States (general ODA, including Security Sector Reform)⁷⁷ and in comparison with other operations of international support.⁷⁸ The EU is the third donor to Afghanistan after the US and Japan (second, if including bilateral ODA of its Member States). Its ratio of disbursement over commitment reaches over 90% and is

⁷⁵ Government of Afghanistan, Ministry of Finance (MoF), *Donor Financial Review*, Kabul, November 2009, and Government of Afghanistan, Ministry of Finance (MoF), *Development Co-operation Report 2012*, Kabul, 2012.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ "Counting all sources, the average Afghan received about \$50 in foreign aid in each of the first two years following the installation of the Karzai regime. By comparison, the average Kosovar had received ten times more assistance and the average Bosnian twelve times more assistance over a comparable period." in J. Dobbins, US diplomat, Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan since 10 May 2013, "Ending Afghanistan's Civil War", testimony presented before the Armed Services Committee, United States House of Representatives, 30 January 2007, retrieved 1 May 2010, http://www.rand.org/pubs/testimonies/2007/RAND_CT271.pdf.

10 percentage points higher than the ratio of the US. The European Commission's system of Multiannual Indicative Programmes (MIP) usually generates a good predictability of aid. As of 15 May 2014, however, the last Multiannual Indicative Programme for Afghanistan published is the MIP 2011-2013; the MIP for the following years is still unavailable on the EU's websites.⁷⁹ This can be explained by the EU starting a new multiannual financial framework in 2014, which implies a redistribution of budgets. It can also be explained by the potential difficulties of joint programming in a time of upcoming local elections. This difficulty in programming can finally be traced to the general uncertainty surrounding the future of Afghanistan, but it actually increases this very level of uncertainty.

The European Commission has three main channels of delivery: implementing partners, civil society organisations and budget support (to the Government of Afghanistan or through multi-donor trust funds). Multi-donor trust funds (MDTF) are alternative aid instruments with some degree of local 'ownership': where state capacity is limited, they help in supporting the Government's priorities. Thus, the application of principles and of the UN Reform initiative of 'Delivering as One' is facilitated, notably by reducing the costly fragmentation of aid. Some 30% of European Commission aid provided between 2002 and 2011 has been channelled through MDTF.⁸⁰ In terms of budget support (essential for state-building) and local contracts (more beneficial for the country than international contracts), the European Commission is not particularly advanced.⁸¹ In Afghanistan, three major trust funds have been established: the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan (LOTFA) and the Counter Narcotics Trust Fund (CNTF), which was extended for the second time in 2010. These funds have been proven efficient in implementing the Afghan National Development Strategy. Nonetheless, the issue of donors increasingly pledging funds with 'preferences' has emerged. This is of particular concern for the ARTF, where the proportion of *un-preferenced* pledges went down to 51% in 2008 and did not significantly progress

⁷⁹ See http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/afghanistan/index_en.htm and http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/asia/country-cooperation/afghanistan/0-0-0-afghanistan_en.htm, retrieved May 2014.

⁸⁰ Author's compilation based on figures from Afghan MoF, *Donor Financial Review*, *op.cit.*, p. 45, and from the Afghan MoF, *Development Cooperation Report 2012*, *op.cit.*, p. 53.

⁸¹ OECD, *Aid Effectiveness 2011: Progress in Implementing the Paris Declaration*, Country Chapter Afghanistan, Paris, Better Aid, 2012, p. 15, Table 9; and Peace Dividend Trust, *Spending the Development Dollar Twice: The Local Economic Impact of Procurement in Afghanistan*, New York, July 2009, p. 12.

since then (58% in 2013).⁸² The Government of Afghanistan affirms that it is being deprived of its room for manoeuvre and is concerned about the fact that the predictability of funding is too low.⁸³ Consequently, it advocates multi-annual pledges.

Building security with civilian means

In the framework of its commitment to contribute to “a secure, stable [...] and democratic Afghanistan”, the EU chose to focus on the police and the judiciary.⁸⁴ With 40% of the European Commission’s aid budget for Afghanistan, the governance sector receives the biggest share of Commission funds.⁸⁵ It works through the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan, for which the EU is the third largest contributor. The fund supports police force remuneration, pays for its equipment, supplies and facilities, as well as for some of its recruitment and training. LOTFA also supports the Central Prisons Department personnel and the introduction of a nationwide ID card system.⁸⁶ Despite the significant success of the programme, which is exemplified by its achievements such as the construction of 628 police check posts, accountability and institutional capacity building in LOTFA’s projects still need to be improved.⁸⁷

EUPOL Afghanistan is the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) mission mandated to participate in police training. Given the intergovernmental nature of the CSDP, both the EU and its Member States are referred to below. Launched in 2007 under the German presidency of the EU, the EUPOL mission was a solution for the German Police Project Office facing up the US pressure to improve police training while at the same time sharing the costs. However, this mission soon became a symbol of the EU’s inability to mobilise resources effectively. The

⁸² World Bank, *ARTF Performance Assessment Matrix, Progress and Challenges*, Kabul, March 2009, p. 2, retrieved April 2010, http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTAFGHANISTAN/Resources/Afghanistan-Reconstructional-Trust-Fund/ARTF_Performance_Assessment_Matrix_Mar30_09.pdf; and World Bank, *ARTF Scorecard*, Kabul, 2013, p. 41, retrieved February 2014, http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTAFGHANISTAN/Resources/Afghanistan-Reconstructional-Trust-Fund/ARTF_Performance_Assessment_Matrix_Mar30_09.pdf.

⁸³ Ministry of Finance, *Development Cooperation Report 2012*, *op.cit.*, pp. 23-24.

⁸⁴ *EU-Afghanistan Joint Declaration*, *op.cit.*, p. 1.

⁸⁵ 40% of the €600 million EC budget 2011-2013 to Afghanistan is allocated to the ‘governance’ pillar. European Commission, *Multiannual Indicative Programme 2011-13, Afghanistan*, Brussels, p. 32.

⁸⁶ European Commission, *Afghanistan State of Play July 2012*, p. 6, retrieved January 2014, http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/asia/country-co-operation/afghanistan/documents/eu_afghanistan_state-of-play_0712_en.pdf.

⁸⁷ Atos Consulting UK, *Evaluation of the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan (LOTFA) Phase V, Report*, UNDP-Afghanistan, 17 April 2012, pp. 6&31, retrieved March 2014, <http://www.undp.org.af/Projects/Report2011/lotfa/evaluation%20report%20%20final.pdf>.

deployment of the mission was first delayed because security agreements with NATO were blocked by Turkey. Then the Head of Mission, to show his concern about the stalemate and the corruption in the Afghan National Police (ANP), resigned after five months in office. Between July 2010 and February 2014, EUPOL has provided training to 8,100 police staff and delivered 2,600 Afghan police trainer degrees. EUPOL has also established an Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office and funded the Police Staff College building for an overall budget of €210 million⁸⁸ (around €60 million per year).⁸⁹ This represents an investment of €26,000 per person.⁹⁰ In addition, the mission is of very limited size and has not managed to recruit the experts it needs. It is composed of 290 international staff and 200 local staff (as of February 2014), when its target is 400 international police trainers for the entire country. In this context, NATO Secretary General Rasmussen announced that NATO would also train the Afghan police from October 2009. Police training results are still not palpable, with its ranks described as "blotted by bribery, extortion, drug-running and defections to the Taliban".⁹¹

In many Member States of the EU, the selection of personnel for EUPOL is a prerogative of the regional government. In addition, "each mission consists of volunteers and requires ad hoc organisation of the logistic support and command".⁹² Jo Coelmont argues that it is necessary to consider building an in-house civilian 'battlegroup', as these organisational issues of the EU are hampering its capacity to deliver.⁹³ This is particularly worrying since "policing goes to the very heart of state-building [and] is central to government legitimacy".⁹⁴ EUPOL and the European contribution to the LOTFA are the main channels for the EU to contribute to the

⁸⁸ Author's own compilation.

⁸⁹ Council of the European Union Secretariat, *Factsheet on the EU Police Mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL AFGHANISTAN)*, February 2014, retrieved May 2014, http://eeas.europa.eu/csdp/missions-and-operations/eupol-afghanistan/pdf/factsheet_eupol_afghanistan_en.pdf.

⁹⁰ Author's own compilation.

⁹¹ G. Jaffe, "Program Aims to Rebuild Afghan Police Force, Repair its Image", *The Washington Post*, 12 March 2010. For statistical data on bribery in the public sector of Afghanistan, see UNODC, *Corruption in Afghanistan: Recent patterns and integrity challenges in the public sector*, Vienna, October 2013. This report is the second edition of UNODC's work on corruption in Afghanistan. Conclusions on trends in bribery should not be considered authoritative: they are based on two data sets (2009 and 2012), which is not sufficient to understand long-term evolutions.

⁹² J. Coelmont (ed.), "End-State Afghanistan", *Egmont Paper*, no. 29, Royal institute for International Relations, Gent, Academia Press, March 2009, pp. 16-17.

⁹³ J. Coelmont, lecture, College of Europe, Bruges, 19 March 2010.

⁹⁴ International Crisis Group, "Reforming Afghanistan's Police", *Asia Report*, no. 138, Kabul, 30 August 2007, p. 3.

Security Sector Reform and the 'interdicting' dimension of counter-narcotics (see Figure 1 above). Jamie Shea calls for the EU to stop training low level police and to make better use of its experts, for instance in agriculture.⁹⁵ The Council of the EU, in its Conclusions of January 2014, affirms that it will continue to support civilian policing and justice beyond 2014 but that a strategic review of EUPOL Afghanistan is under discussion.⁹⁶

The most praised area of EU expertise is trade.⁹⁷ The sheer size of its market and its experience of negotiating international trade agreements make the Union "a formidable power in trade".⁹⁸ Despite Afghanistan's small trading volume and poor productive capacity, trade development has a major role to play in the stabilisation of the country, fostering growth and reducing the inflow of precursors needed to process opium.

Trade for development and prospect for an EU trade policy towards Afghanistan

Afghanistan's past comparative advantages show that legitimate trade ought to play a central role in the country's economic growth. "In 1978 Afghanistan was largely self-sufficient in food and was a significant exporter of agricultural products", as well as of natural gas to the Soviet Union.⁹⁹ At the junction of trade routes between Central, South and West Asia, the Afghan economy historically relied on trade until flows were disturbed by the war in 1979. Today, the two main problems facing Afghan trade are problems of administration and investment. In fact, "administrative delays and informal payments can account for a majority of transit time and half of transit costs" of goods in Afghanistan.¹⁰⁰ With diminished skills, poor organisation and weak processing capacity eroding comparative advantage, the World Bank reports major difficulties in revamping sectors that were profitable in the

⁹⁵ Interview with Jamie Shea, Director of Policy Planning in the Private Office of the NATO Secretary General, NATO, Brussels, 17 February 2010. *The views expressed in this interview are personal.*

⁹⁶ Council of the European Union, *Council Conclusions on Afghanistan*, Foreign Affairs Council meeting, Brussels, 20 January 2014.

⁹⁷ S. Meunier & K. Nicolaidis, "The European Union as a Conflicted Trade Power", *Journal of European Public Policy*, vol. 13, no. 6, September 2006.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 906.

⁹⁹ World Bank, *Afghanistan Approach Paper*, November 2001, p. 2, retrieved May 2010, <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTAFGHANISTAN/Resources/afgApproach.pdf>.

¹⁰⁰ A. Pappas, *Trade Promotion in Afghanistan: Roles for Infrastructure and Institutions*, 24 April 2009, Washington DC, p. 1, retrieved May 2010, <http://www.sais-jhu.edu/bin/g/a/Pappas%20Afghan%20Policy%20Paper%20v5.1.pdf>.

past.¹⁰¹ In the 1960s and 1970s, Afghan raisins, for instance, “were an important export by international standards, with good markets especially in India and other regional countries”.¹⁰² “However, production approaches are now outdated, yields are low, processing facilities have deteriorated, and packing and marketing are sub-standard. In the meantime, other countries have filled the gap and Afghanistan has not just to revive but to catch up.”¹⁰³

The transit of goods purchased duty-free from Dubai and smuggled into Pakistan provides one of the major sources of income for local warlords. Such trafficking weakens the Government of Afghanistan’s attempts to build a monopoly of force and deprives it from customs revenue. “Black or grey markets are a strong incentive for both government employees and regional strongmen to maintain weak states”¹⁰⁴, which also holds true for the opium market. The country primarily needs to build up its customs and administrative services to control trade. The work which the EU leads on customs facilities in Torkham, Sher-Khan Bandar (Tajikistan border) or Heiratan (Uzbekistan border) may thus exert an important leverage on stability and in breaking the war economy spiral.

Afghanistan benefits from the EU’s ‘Everything But Arms’ unilateral trade initiative.¹⁰⁵ However, the Union’s presence is still not felt much: the EU is Afghanistan’s third buyer, mainly of primary and leather craft products, with less than 10% of Afghan exports.¹⁰⁶ The Afghan economy has historically been largely focused on trade with its neighbours. Regional trade integration can consequently contribute to the long-term economic development of the country and the EU can contribute by providing assistance to customs administration and by supporting Afghanistan’s endeavour to join the World Trade Organization.

¹⁰¹ C. Ward, D. Mansfield, P. Oldham & W. Byrd, *Afghanistan, Economic Incentives and Development initiatives to Reduce Opium Production*, World Bank & DFID, February 2008, p. 15.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 40.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ B. Rubin & A. Armstrong, “Regional Issues in the Reconstruction of Afghanistan”, *World Policy Journal*, Spring 2003, p. 32.

¹⁰⁵ The ‘Everything But Arms’ initiative is a EU initiative meant to help least developed countries (LDC) integrate further into the global economy by giving them full duty free and quota-free access to the EU market for all their exports with the exception of arms.

¹⁰⁶ European Commission, DG Trade, *Afghanistan, EU Bilateral Trade and Trade with the World*, Brussels, 7 November 2013, pp. 6-7, retrieved February 2014, http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/september/tradoc_114134.pdf.

Tackling the opium issue through regional cooperation

Any reference to regional cooperation in Southwest Asia, landlocked between Central and South Asia, and surrounded by long-standing antagonisms, "is apt to raise a weary smile".¹⁰⁷ It has, however, been argued that the "long-term stability of Afghanistan is mainly contingent upon its integration in a regional co-operative framework".¹⁰⁸ For the EU, the promotion of regional integration is part of a strategy to 'export' its model. In Afghanistan, the impact of its support has been moderate and its actions still seem rather driven by short to medium-term perspectives.¹⁰⁹ The EU has, however, increasingly supported UNODC's rainbow project, a regional forum linked to counter-narcotics that could have a long-term impact. Depending on the issue discussed, the forum involves different countries and tends to show a low level of integration, with each regional cooperation structure dedicated to a single policy. If evolving towards broader and greater coordination, these programmes could help the EU promote regional integration. As the UNODC's first contributor (12.3% of its budget), the EU exerts influence on these regional programmes.¹¹⁰

During her hearing at the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee, Catherine Ashton declared that the EU needs to "provide concrete results about what we do to the citizens of Afghanistan".¹¹¹ "What we do", that is supporting the Government of Afghanistan in building up capacity and in fostering development, has produced mixed results. For the EU to influence economic calculations and help tackle the problem of opium in Afghanistan, its 'cooperative power' capacity is arguably relevant but still shows shortcomings. The Union has already contributed to progress of governance, notably in customs affairs. Its Official Development Assistance is delivered in a principled way but is of a moderate size if not added (and coordinated) with Member States' ODA. It has taken a significant role in trade and regional cooperation, but outcome is still minimal in these areas. Finally, in the

¹⁰⁷ A. Bailes (ed.), "Regionalism in South Asian Diplomacy", *SIPRI Policy Paper*, no. 15, Stockholm, February 2007, p. 4.

¹⁰⁸ S.M. D'Souza, "Afghanistan in South Asia", *South Asian Survey*, vol. 16, no. 1, New Delhi, March 2009, pp. 23-42.

¹⁰⁹ D. Korski, "Shaping Europe's Afghan Surge", *European Council on Foreign Relations Policy Brief*, no. 11, London, March 2009, p. 14.

¹¹⁰ Calculated from figures retrieved May 2010, <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/donors/donorlist/index.html?ref=menuaside>.

¹¹¹ C. Ashton, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the European Commission, Hearing at the European Parliament, European Parliament, Brussels, 11 January 2010, retrieved May 2010, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/008-66979-008-01-02-901-20100108IPR66978-08-01-2010-2010-false/default_en.htm.

field of Security Sector Reform, the EU was unable to live up to the challenge. Where the European Commission has direct authority to act, programmes are launched. It can to a certain extent mobilise funds and allocate them in a principled manner, but it does not always have sufficient field structures and personnel to ensure optimal implementation on its own.

Conclusions: drawing lessons from the past

Opium is arguably a core ingredient of the conflict in Afghanistan: it ensures its sustainability. The production of opium has been at the heart of a war economy for several decades and in a variety of political settings. Any peace-building and state-building attempt has to integrate a comprehensive strategy to transform this war economy. The emerging state and peace have to be as gainful as the war economy to numerous stakeholders in order to be accepted and in order to persist. This paper set out to understand the extent to which the European Union can help tackle the problem of opium in Afghanistan. Exploring the idea of drug crops shaping economic and political structures in Afghanistan, it showed that a comprehensive, poverty-oriented approach is necessary to initiate a sustainable change in behaviour and to succeed in counter-narcotics policies. The EU's general strategies and specific policies represent a strong basis for such actions, making it a particularly relevant partner for Afghanistan.

However, the methods used until now have not been able to tackle poppy production. The negative incentives of criminalisation and eradication proved insufficient and often counter-productive. When coupled with the positive incentives of cash-for-work and alternative crops programmes, counter-narcotics are often seen as too weak or lacking local ownership to significantly succeed. The experience of these failures tends to demonstrate that in order to produce substantial results, programmes designed to tackle the issue of opium cultivation must be comprehensive (massive and cross-cutting) and take into account the principles of aid effectiveness. The opium issue is central in the Afghan security-development nexus, and it takes a broad policy pursuing a poverty-reduction objective to untangle its complexities. The analysis shows that the EU's structural approach takes these past failures into account.

For now, the EU's influence has been limited. European-level harmonisation proves difficult in the field of counter-narcotics. Its aid to Afghanistan is significant but smaller than aid from Japan if not including EU Member States' bilateral assistance.

The EU's contribution to police training is hampered by organisational issues and the European market represents less than 10% of Afghan exports. Regional cooperation is key to fight opium and foster development. The EU is in essence a coordinator, taking governments beyond the mere addition of their wills and actions. It has a crucial role to play in fostering regional partnerships, in the harmonisation of international development aid efforts and in ensuring that the momentum for a comprehensive poverty-reduction approach does not vanish. After 2014, the international community is likely to turn away from Afghanistan, which actually needs increased attention from development agencies. This would not be new: after Russian forces withdrew from the country in 1989 and after the regime of President Mohammad Najibullah fell in 1992, "[t]he United States and its allies lost interest in Afghanistan and did little to help rebuild the war-ravaged country".¹¹² Yet, if Afghanistan counts for the EU's security, turning a blind eye to opium should be carefully avoided.

¹¹² A. Siddique, "Decades After Soviet Exit, Another Superpower Is Tied Down In Afghan Conflict", *Radio Free Europe*, 14 February 2009, retrieved January 2010, http://www.rferl.org/content/Decades_After_Soviet_Exit_Another_Superpower_Is_Tied_Down_In_Afghan_Conflict/1493143.html.

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